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# STAFF CONFERENCE

Tuesday, February 18, 1941

Present: RBF, TBA, JM, FBH, DHS, HMM, ARM, JAF, RAL, JHW, AJW

RBF Conference called to consider possibility of extended program in Mexico; RAL, HMM and JAF, going soon to Mexico; Vice-President Wallace recently talked with JHW; situation seems to be developing in various quarters and in various parts of the Foundation, and should be talked over before some leave. RBF and JAF have talked with Wallace, who sees work primarily in fields of health, broader than that now under way, and in agriculture. W. thinks that if Foundation, or some agency or agencies, could concentrate efforts in these fields, enormous progress would result - specifically, if anyone could help to raise the yield of corn and beans per acre, that would do more than any other approach. There is no scientific agriculture at present time, no agricultural economics. Need is for specialists and demonstrations such as the G.E.B. did in our South twenty years ago. Would be undertaken as a contribution to the standard of living. Program of health by itself not connected with anything to raise the standard of living would result in depressing the standard of living - health by itself not enough - must be supported by agricultural economics.

RBF feels that as Foundation is driven out of Europe, and perhaps Asia, its unique opportunity is going to be for development of Central and South America. MS is off on extended program in SA; the public health program has been extended there through opening of the B.A. office; DHS is planning trip for Humanities. We should pull the thing together somehow - understand the plan, and not have different representatives of different fields working in same locality without a great deal of information of what others are doing. Asks reports and comments, given as follows:

1. DHS Only Humanities grant in Mexico is to the Institute in Mexico City, a model for opening up work in all countries on analysis of basic material; is self-contained; touches in many ways SS activities. Have two or three other interesting requests, chiefly in library field; and one, through Wallace, concerned with rapid learning of English by secondary school teachers. A unique language project is to put native languages into form offering chance to transmit useful knowledge by print. Recently government has been taking back to their own provinces younger teachers who can teach natives to read and write in their own language. The strongest of these, the Tarascan project, produced series of pamphlets and bulletins, mostly on public health, a little on agriculture; and is sending out trained teachers in this dialect to work in schools. Is an exciting approach with a partly political object to aid Indian populations.



Fundamentally the program is to stick to basic things, like organization of material, mostly in print, and using as good laboratory for more rapid learning of Spanish and English on both sides of the border. In SA, trip has two ideas: the library side - hoping to get trained workers for advanced studies as well as plans for popular distribution. Library. Rio, Santiago and Buenos Aires are the three important centers. Librarian at Buenos Aires will be on boat. Mr. Berrien, Assistant Director ACLS going to Rio to spend about 3 weeks, particularly working on material for intensive course in Portuguese and Spanish this summer which the Foundation has financed. Has one or two ideas to get something for SS - DHS will also. Agrees that program is self-contained, except that one or two grants to train people in organizing and getting material would help in any other field. JAF brings up subject of Federal District libraries, which are not properly indexed. DHS: not much to say - conditions hopeless until politicians are out - Caso is moving in his own subjects. JAF: central clearance or index of material would be valuable project in public health if there is nothing to do in broader way. RAL points to difficulties of doing that from outside - if there were a desire it would be well worth while in medical field alone. DHS reports very able young Mexican in New York Public Library who could be useful when there is opportunity. JAF reports nearly 50 returned fellows in public health crying to have access to literature.

2. RAL Is returning after 4 years, in which not much has happened. Is to see what MS can do in improving medical education for sake of public health. If MS has done little that has been measure of what the Mexicans were ready to do - not worth while to train men for private practice. We are going to have to compromise - may not be economically feasible to build up medical education as we think wise. MS must start there and train men - that takes years. Mexico and Cuba almost the hardest countries to cooperate with.
3. HMM Situation in NS same as in MS - same training errand. Officers know some good people with whom to make contacts.
4. ARM Has not visited Mexico, or read extensively. Obvious starting point would be to try to find out what personnel is available in any significant field related to agriculture - would expect to find one or more people worth building upon.

Would have to look more broadly than Wallace has suggested. One realizes diversities of soil, climate, elevation. Would wish to start with broader approach to discover what are problems in agriculture. Plant breeding would be important aspect of any program - one of the most direct, and can show results rather quickly. Should have two approaches: with our knowledge and experience, could get behind superficial work and look for persons, perhaps not in agriculture, but in NS or SS subjects, perhaps for persons who could profit by training. The other approach is through demonstration of existing knowledge: simple method of selection of seed stocks



which could be taught to farmers is effective; next is comparative variety trials, which do not require any extension of basic research; third, a more fundamental problem of breeding comes next. To start processes one would think in terms of kinds of demonstrations that could be made that would make available existing knowledge. Question of dealing with essential problems needs a great deal of thought. Chinese program may have something to offer (plant improvement program in Nanking and Yenching and Nankai ?). Just a few fields are likely to be most helpful: basic plant improvement; plant protection (of great interest to farmers); soil science, whole question of soil fertility; animal husbandry. FBH: Finding personnel capable of work at basic level is something NS could do through HMM's visit - that aspect could be handled by NS in both Mexico and SA. When it comes to demonstration work, would be dependent upon getting experts, possibly first for survey and report; or possibly finding some one person to spend a year there.

RBF Raises question of how such a program of agriculture, if undertaken by Foundation would head up? NS? FBH: Thinks it might head up in NS. Contacts in this country, for example in chemistry, are often in schools of agriculture. Regular NS budget not sufficient to cover.

5. JHW Makes one suggestion: hopes that before RF goes overboard too far it obtain formally invited criticism of Carl Sauer. Is in entire sympathy with importance of focussing on agriculture.

Has one or two Latin American projects in SS under consideration - the proposal of the University of California for some work in Latin America. His theory that one or two centers here which perhaps stress the SS and constitute a bridge might be desirable - first task to be sure we understand Latin America. Reference to financing trip of Vera Dean, Foreign Policy Association, and to a memorandum of Frank Fetter's of Haverford. Emphasizes size of gulf in development of certain branches of work - patterns of economics built up here do not have much application, same in political science except in diplomatic relations. Fields of history, geography, anthropology have more pertinence.

6. AJW IHD has had program in Mexico since 1920, beginning with control of yellow fever, then organization of hookworm campaign for government, which effort developed under JAF into local health units. Has had satisfactory fellowship program - practically all returned fellows in some government work. Excellent opportunities in field of public health and in all other fields. Would make one general point: certainly in 1936, when he last visited, Mexico was recognized as leading central American country, with definite influence.

Any program would have begun on lower level than in Europe - some compromises necessary. Believes, however, most people have underestimated capacity and ability of better class of Mexicans.



RAL: it takes money to extend local health units - where is that money coming from? Reports remarks by Frank Tannenbaum discounting likelihood of increases in national income from agriculture or minerals; and suggesting the only likely increase is from tourists. On pessimistic side about doing anything rapidly.

JHW: Assumes whatever is done would be on very modest scale. There ought to be some clear answer to another problem; worst thing RF could do would be to start and stop in 3 or 4 years. Within that time the need and demand from Europe may be great - Foundation should be free to respond to essential requests from there. What is likely to be the interest of the USA in Mexico after peace in Europe? RBF: the answer to last question is impossible to guess. Foundation ability to maintain program is significant.

JM Suggests possibility of utilizing some means of diffusion as we go along - cites development in Mexico in film making.

FBH Would a 3-5 year program on practical side go fairly far? ARM: Definitely longer than that - would not take a vast amount of money but would take time.

JAF There are areas of agricultural importance, such as Torreon where a start could be made without enormous outlay. Lack of money makes real education a gesture - little more than on paper. Higher education group have not seemed to extend themselves in an effort to connect with low standards of living of masses. New effort must tie in at level or somewhat above level of people. If no one in government is ready, effort from without will stir resentment rather than welcome - can move only as rapidly as leadership can be secured and maintained from governmental resources. To try to start at university level will not be successful in long run.

RBF In summary: RAL and HMM about to start out - coming back through Havana - able to report jointly; and part of findings would relate to fundamental basis of agricultural program. Meantime, ARM and FBH shall constitute themselves a committee of two to give a memorandum on agricultural approach to Mexico. Trustees would have to decide. Should hope to discuss something in April.